

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

April 8, 2003

LB 303

SPEAKER BROMM: Senator Smith, would you yield? You're taking the time? Okay. Proceed.

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members. The...I do want to point out one thing, and that is traumatic brain injury is not caused 100 percent by motorcycles. It's not caused 100 percent by not wearing a helmet. There are numerous ways that one can acquire traumatic brain injury, TBI. I think in prior debate we heard that in America there are 13,000 people who die each year from falling down. We've probably heard that helmets reduce the risk of death in a motorcycle crash by 35 percent and I...pardon me while I read this because I want to get the details straight. The average person hearing this on radio or television would think that meant anyone in a motorcycle accident without a helmet would be killed 35 percent of the time. That would stand to reason. The truth is that this is a percentage of a percentage. The report states that motorcycle helmets protect from any type of injury in only 9 percent of accidents. Only 1.3 percent of the unhelmeted group died, and that is the portion that they estimate 35 percent would have lived if wearing a hearing, 35 of 1.3 percent. That comes out to .46 percent. An estimated .46 percent of the people in motorcycle accidents would not have died had they been wearing a helmet. Is what the report really says is 91 percent of all motorcycle accidents the rider received absolutely no benefit from wearing a helmet. That's really what the report says. And I reflect back to testimony from hearings in the past and then in written testimony in the hearing this year. Dr. Waters out of Omaha, an orthopedic surgeon, he's the one who suggested that an amount of weight averaging four pounds additional weight on one's shoulders can cause more neck injury upon being jarred than if it were not there. Now I'm not going to say that helmets are dangerous because of that. I'm just offering more information to consider that there are more details to the whole picture here if you'd care to look. What was interesting is...was just presented some information. It says, attached is a breakdown of how many people under the age of 64 are in long-term care. We looked at people under age of 65 because they are probably in long-term care for a reason other than old age. There are approximately 100 people on Medicaid due to traumatic brain injury. I go back